

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Frey Votes In Favor of maintaining State's Death Penalty



HARTFORD - On Wednesday, March 30, State Rep. John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, voted against legislation that would have abolished the death penalty in Connecticut. Rep. Frey spoke in opposition to the bill during the debate on the Floor of the House of Representatives. It was defeated in a 89-60 vote.

Since 1991, there have been four proposals to repeal the death penalty brought before the full House of Representatives, with each failing. The fourth proposal, in 2001, would have placed a two-year stay on any execution, rather than a full repeal. According to the non-partisan Office of Legislative Research (OLR), the bill would have eliminated the death penalty as a sentencing option, and made the penalty for this new crime life imprisonment without the possibility of release. For people sentenced to death before the bill's effective date, the bill would have commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment without possibility of release.

The debate touched upon many aspects of the controversial issue, said Rep Frey. Some of topics debated included: Whether the death penalty actually serves as a deterrent against heinous crimes and the impact on state taxpayers to house, feed and provide health care for the duration of a prisoner's life vs. legal costs associated with prosecuting death penalty cases; moral issues involving capital punishment, and details of some of crimes committed by the eight inmates currently on Connecticut's death row.

It was also noted during the debate that our state last executed a death row inmate in 1960 and in spite of legislation passed into law in 1995 to create a more "workable" death penalty (by allowing courts to weigh aggravating vs. mitigating factors), has yet to execute any death row inmates.

During the debate, Rep. Frey spoke of the considerable amount of time he spent researching the issue of Connecticut's death penalty, including those inmates currently on death row and the crimes they committed. "It gave me some sleepless nights - not so much because I was wrestling with the issue per se, but the heinous, brutal nature of the crimes," said Rep. Frey, who serves as an Assistant Minority Leader.

"I do feel strongly that Connecticut should maintain a death penalty punishment," said Rep. Frey. "As history indicates, it is very difficult to sentence a convicted murderer to

death. Since 1970, there have been 4,330 murders or non-negligent manslaughter cases in our state. Yet, there are only seven men sitting on death row and it's been 45 years since an execution has taken place. Connecticut applies the death penalty sparingly. There is evidence that suggests capital punishment may be a crime deterrent. I do not believe that the sentences imposed by the seven juries, which resulted in the inmates awaiting execution should be overturned. And I believe that in Connecticut, a jury should be able to impose the ultimate penalty."